

The Sherman Parsonage
Fairfield, Connecticut

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District Of Connecticut

Historic American Buildings Survey
Harold H. Davis, District Officer
29 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn.

THE SHERMAN PARSONAGE

Fairfield, Fairfield County, Conn.

Owner: Congregational Church and Society, Fairfield, Conn.

Date of Erection: 1809

Architect or Builder: Honorable Roger M. Sherman

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two and one-half

Materials of Construction: Clapboard sidewalls
Stone Foundation
Brick chimneys
Leaded glass - front door side-
light and transom.

Other Existing Records: An old New England Church - F.S.Childs
A Country Paris (Page 197) " "
The House With Sixty Closets " "
History Of Fairfield County
(Pages 326-329)
Old Houses of Conn. - Colonial Dames
of America (Pages 499-501)

List of Photographs:

1. Front Elevation
2. Entrance Detail
3. Fireplace - South Bed Room
4. Doorway to Living Room
5. Archway Detail - Entrance Hall

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This dignified and elegant mansion surrounded by tulip trees and fine old maples, stands about 25' back from the Main St., (Old Post Road) of Fairfield. It was finished in 1816 and was one of the largest and most attractive dwelling houses along the sound during the early part of the last century.

Its central hall was spacious, the east and west drawing room measuring 25' x 18' x 18', and its kitchen and bedrooms were correspondingly ample. The lofty second story and the high attic imparted an appearance of amplitude and princeliness. The old fashioned porch at the front door was in perfect keeping with the massive door, and with the leaded fan window above it, and the leaded glass at its side.

The velvet carpets for the drawing room were manufactured to order in England; and when they arrived it was discovered (so the story goes) that they were five or seven feet too long - so the lady of the house insisted that wings be added to the room, which enlargement is plainly visible on inspection today. A little later the east wing was added for the accommodation of the judges' library, the main room of the wing being used as his office. Later still the west wing was added in order to enlarge the kitchen conveniences.

A further addition, which enhanced the stateliness and the imposing appearance of the mansion, was the veranda in front of the wings containing the judges' library. The beautiful fluted columns with its symmetrical base and elaborate entablature, attract the observer and enriches the architecture most agreeably.

Four chimneys amply accommodate the fireplaces in the house; although as a means of warmth for the old fashioned winter they proved seriously inadequate, and other heating arrangements were introduced. First stoves, then a hot air furnace, and finally a hot water system.

Various changes were made in the mansion during later years; a colonial portico making way for the piazza extending nearly across the front of the main part of the house and a rear veranda enclosed with glass adding to the comfort of the place.

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The kitchen was transferred to a rear wing and the old kitchen converted into a dining room. The latest transformation is dated 1905, when the ladies of the parish modernized the mansion by putting down hard wood floors, installing water and gas, and refurnishing the rooms.

It is a fact that the house contained sixty closets and so curious and interesting was this arrangement that the closets became the subject of many stories. More than twenty of these varied and secret places have vanished and more capacious bedrooms have taken their places. But forty of them remain to gladden the hearts of housekeepers and little people. The change of the judges' office and library into the ministers study caused the disappearance of several closets - but many of the judges' books, his literary and historical library, abide under glass cases in the old room; a memorial to his fine taste and wide scholarship.

The mansion has been hospitable through the years, entertaining many college presidents and professors, literary people, lecturers, statesmen, clergymen, and public men in various walks of life, thus sustaining the best traditions of this place and enriching the precious associations which cluster about Sherman Parsonage - making it one of the notable historic houses of Connecticut.

The Congregational Parsonage was built for the Honorable Roger Minott Sherman, who was born at Woburn, Mass., on May 22, 1773. He was the youngest of six children of Rev. Joshua Sherman, the Congregational Minister of that place. His father was a descendant from four generations from Captain John Sherman of Dedham, England, who came to Watertown, Mass., in 1635. Honorable Roger M. Sherman was a nephew of the Honorable Roger Sherman, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He attended Yale in 1788 at the age of 16. In 1796 he was admitted to the Bar in New Haven. In 1807 he removed to Fairfield where he resided till his death, which occurred December 30, 1844.

The most important legacy of the kind came from Judge and Mrs. Sherman, and today reposes behind glass cases in the study of the Parsonage. Brass plates on the cases being properly inscribed with the words "Private Library of Judge Roger Minott Sherman. A gift to the First Ecclesiastical Society of Fairfield, for the use of the Ministers' Library."

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The house was built in 1816 and its title included between eight and nine acres of land. Besides being unusual as a house with sixty closets, and again unusual in the fact of causing the first floor rooms to be enlarged to fit the extra large carpets, it also contained three cellars.

Judge and Mrs. Sherman occupied their beautiful and stately house until their death, at which time it passed into possession of the church to which they were so devotedly attached.

Source of Information: An Old New England Church - F.S. Childs
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